

ARE LODGES DEGREE MILLS?

In a recent letter you note the extreme difficulty of introducing to the notice of Masons the study side, or the heart side of Masonry. The plain truth is that Masonry is very popular and prosperous, a condition that existed with variations in the '20s during the anti-Masonic excitement incident to the Morgan disappearance, during which period of persecution, proscription and ostracism about 75 per cent of the Craft fell away. Why did they fall away? The answer is found in the view taken that Masonry is not of Divine origin, that it perhaps dates from the building of Solomon's temple, or from the guilds of the Romans or Germans; that Masonry was once operative and later was speculative, a failure to recognize the Duality of Masonry; that there is a "Spirit of Masonry"; that Masonry has to do with the psychic, or soul part of man, as well as the physical, the heart part, no matter in what age of the world he lived, had first to be touched before he was a Mason. This is known as the religious part of man, and is primitive; it was known before and recognized by Christ when he answered Nicodemus who wanted to know how he could be born again, when He said, "And thou Nicodemus, a master in Israel and knoweth not these things." Nicodemus' view was purely physical. The "Spirit of Masonry is the life of Masonry," which is a self-evident fact, for all things physical die. Masonry has not died, nor will it ever die. The spiritual is recognized as the immortal part of man - the part that takes him out of the animal kingdom.

That a man must first be a Mason at heart is too often lightly passed over, with the result that Masonic Lodges are filled largely with physical Masons only. They know nothing about the spiritual or heart side, or the philosophical. Masonry teaches a perfect system for earthly life, and in the end will assist the true Mason to climb the ladder which Jacob saw in his vision. Well, what has all this to do with interesting the brethren in the study side? Perhaps to 75 per cent of Lodge membership it means nothing; doesn't appeal to them for the above reasons. "As a man thinketh so is he." Thoughtful Masons everywhere note the tendency of Lodges to degenerate into degree mills. The best Lodge is the one that does the most work," and the "brightest" Mason is the proficient degree worker. The brethren attend lodge when there is "work" to do or a "feed" spread. In the absence of these attractions, one-third or perhaps one-fourth of the membership attends. This age is material, physical, and mechanical. The cardinal virtues must be invoked to correct it. Masonry is the leaven that has brought the world out of chaos to its present condition; and if its present condition is not good, does it mean that the leaven is not working, that the "salt has lost its savor?"

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